

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 27. (Cancelled).

28. (Previously Presented) A process for preparing a low water-uptake precipitated silica, comprising the following successive steps:

(a) producing an initial feedstock comprising a silicate, the silicate concentration in the feedstock, expressed in SiO₂ equivalent, being less than 15 g/l;

(b) by adding an acidifying agent, bringing the pH of the medium to a value of between 7 and 8 ;

(c) in the resulting medium, simultaneously adding a silicate and an acidifying agent, the respective amounts of added silicate and acidifying agent over time being specifically selected such that, throughout the addition:

- the pH of the reaction medium remains between 7 and 8;

- the silicon concentration in the medium, expressed in SiO₂ equivalent, remains less than or equal to 35 g/l;

(d) adding an acidifying agent to the medium resulting from step (c), so as to bring the medium at a pH of between 3 and 6.5; and

(e) filtering the resulting aqueous silica dispersion, then drying the filter cake obtained at the end of the filtering step.

29. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the silicates used in steps (a) and (c) are alkali silicates.

30. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the acidifying agents used in steps (b), (c) and (d) comprise sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, acetic acid, formic acid and carbonic acid.

31. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the feedstock of step (a) is in the form of an aqueous silicate solution, having a concentration, expressed in SiO₂ equivalent, of less than or equal to 10 g/l.

32. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the acidifying agent of step (b) is introduced in the form of an aqueous solution having a normality of between 0.25 N and 8 N.

33. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the acidifying agent of step (b), is sulfuric acid, introduced in the form of an aqueous solution having a concentration of between 10 g/l and 350 g/l.

34. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the simultaneous addition of the silicate and acidifying agent of step (c) is carried out by continuously adding silicate to the medium, the pH being adjusted during the addition by introducing acidifying agent if the pH of the medium becomes greater than a given control value, of between 7 and 8.

35. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the simultaneous addition of the silicate and acidifying agent of step (c) is carried out by continuously adding silicate to the medium, the pH being adjusted during the addition by introducing silicate if the pH of the medium becomes less than a test value of between 7 and 8.

36. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the simultaneous addition of the silicate and acidifying agent of step (c) comprises in continuously adding both acidifying agent and silicate, with concentrations and flow rates calculated such that, throughout the addition, the pH of the medium remains between 7 and 8.

37. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the silicate that is introduced during the simultaneous addition of step (c) is in the form of an aqueous solution having a concentration of between 10 g/l and 360 g/l.

38. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the acidifying agent that is introduced during the simultaneous addition of step (c) is in the form of an aqueous solution having a normality of between 0.25 N and 8 N.

39. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the addition of step (c) last between 15 and 300 minutes.

40. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein an aluminum compound is introduced to the medium at the end of step (c), and/or between step (c) and step (e).

41. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein step (d) is used, and in that the acidifying agent from step (d) is introduced to the medium in the form of an aqueous solution having a normality of between 0.25 N and 8.

42. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein steps (a), (b) (c) and (d) are carried out at a temperature of between 90 and 100 °C.

43. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein the aqueous silica dispersion resulting from step (d) is subjected to a maturation step, prior to step (e).

44. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 28, wherein step (e) comprises a process of splitting the precipitate cake.

45. (Currently Amended) A Aqueous silica composition obtainable obtained by the splitting process of claim 47 28.

46. (Currently Amended) Precipitated The silica of claim 45 having a water-uptake of less than 6%, obtained by the process of claim 1.

47. (Currently Amended) A method making use of a precipitated silica obtained by the process of claim 1, as a reinforcing filler in a A silicone-based matrix in combination with a reinforcing filler, the filler comprising the silica of claim 45.

48. (Canceled)

49. (Currently) A method making use of a precipitated silica obtained by the process of claim 1, as a reinforcing filler in a A matrix based on one or more elastomers in combination with a reinforcing filler, the filler comprising the silica of claim 45.

50. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 21 combination of claim 49, wherein said matrix based on one or more elastomers is a transparent or translucent matrix.

51. - 54. (Canceled)

55. (New) An article comprising the silica of claim 45, the article comprising one or more of: a thickening agent, a food composition, a cosmetic composition, and a pharmaceutical composition.